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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3464
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4872
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 5111
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0262
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 3105
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4501
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0352
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2005
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 002743

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/16/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: CENTER-RIGHT LEADER CONCERNED AS PEACE TALKS DRAW NEAR

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Nicholas Dean. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Nepali Congress - Democratic President Sher Bahadur Deuba told visiting SCA PDAS Steven Mann October 4 that the Seven Party Alliance government would have to overcome considerable mistrust of the Maoists if it was going to reach a peace deal at the upcoming talks. The main question was Maoist arms management. Deuba said he did not know if the Maoists were serious or not about compromising. Although he was critical of the Government of Nepal's failure to crack down on Maoist abuses, he predicted that any Maoist effort to take power by force would fail.

Mistrust of Maoists On Eve of Summit Talks

¶2. (C) Center-right Nepali Congress - Democratic President and former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba told visiting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Steven Mann that his party as well as others in the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) government were finding it very difficult to trust the Maoists. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN-M) continued to commit rampant violations of the Cease-fire Code of Conduct. The CPN-M was still extorting, still refusing to return property it had confiscated, still recruiting militia and party cadre, still kidnapping and killing. The Nepali people, Deuba said, were very suspicious that the Maoist conversion to democracy was not genuine. At the same time, the Maoist leaders seemed very eager in meetings to join the Interim Government and Parliament.

Maoist Arms Management the Nub

¶3. (C) Deuba emphasized that he had no objection to the CPN-M joining the government -- if its combatants were in cantonments and its weapons were under UN control. The shadow of fear had to be removed. Arms management would be the biggest issue, he predicted, in the talks. The Maoists were insisting on keeping control of their weapons because they wanted to be major political players. The SPA were

ready to offer the CPN-M a political package, but only if the Maoists gave up their arms. Other things had to happen as well. The Maoists had to give up recruitment; the Nepal Army (NA) had already done so. The Maoists kept talking about the NA, but it was not the same. The NA could take over Singha Durbar (note: the seat of the Prime Minister and the Parliament), the NC-D chief stated, but it did not have the same power as the Maoists to create fear throughout the countryside. The Parties were prepared to deal with the NA, to make it accountable to the government. The Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) also had to be made accountable. Senior NC-D leader Minendra Rijal added that the Maoists tried to divide the SPA by raising questions about the NA and the monarchy.

U.S. Supports Peace, But Not At Any Price

4.(C) PDAS Mann affirmed that the USG strongly supported unity within the governing coalition as the peace process moved forward. We wanted to assist the process and a positive outcome. In our view, however, it was not the process which was most important. It could not be a peace at any price but had to be a meaningful peace.

Maoist Intentions?

¶5. (C) The SCA PDAS asked if it was possible for the Maoists to compromise and remain Maoists. The NC-D President admitted that he still was not sure if the CPN-M was serious or not. The Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) had a very different ideology from the NC-D, but they had become part of Nepali democracy. He suggested that if the international community were united,

that the Maoists would think twice about abandoning the peace process and returning to the jungle. The international community needed to be firm. Deuba encouraged the U.S. to manage and work with India, China, Japan and the European Union especially. International pressure helped to keep the Maoists in line and strengthened the GON. The NC-D chief reported that Maoist Supremo Prachanda had said the CPN-M would be smashed by foreign countries if it attempted an October Revolution. The Maoists, Deuba, stated, would not have even talked about arms separation if not for U.S. and other international pressure.

Future of Maoist Militia

¶6. (C) In response to a question from PDAS Mann, Deuba agreed that the Maoist militia had not gotten the attention thus far that it merited. The issue was not just the Maoist PLA. The militia had small arms while the common people had none. In order to prevent them from intimidating people, the militia needed to be dissolved. As Minendra Rijal said, without security in the countryside, there could be no free and fair election.

Role of India

¶7. (C) Deuba praised Ambassador Moriarty for his plain talk about Maoist abuses, but complained that the Indians were not as clear. They had leverage with the CPN-M, but, for some reason, were not using it. The former Prime Minister asked: Didn't they see the risk to India that the Maoists posed? PDAS Mann argued that, even with the left parties in the governing coalition in Delhi, India had no interest in a Maoist takeover. Still, it seemed odd, Minendra Rijal noted, that the Indians were complaining about U.S. military training to the GON but keeping silent about the Maoists. Deuba conceded, however, that even the Indian left did not think the CPN-M should be allowed to retain its arms.

Risk of Maoist Takeover

¶8. (C) The NC-D President downplayed the risk of a Maoist takeover. The international situation was not favorable, and the democratic parties still enjoyed considerable support. The GON also needed to enforce the law. A crackdown by the police and the NA was going to be particularly important if the talks failed. Deuba said he had stressed to the PM -- without success -- that the Home Minister needed to be replaced. In the people's movement in April 2006, it had been the King vs. the democrats. If there were another people's movement in October or November, it would be the democrats vs. the Maoists. The CPN-M would have difficulty prevailing.

Comment

¶9. (C) As the NC-D chief pointed out to PDAS Mann, Maoist Supremo Prachanda has been talking lately about his commitment to democracy and indicating flexibility in meetings with party leaders. At the same time, the CPN-M has continued its campaign of extortion, violence and intimidation. Deuba said he was intensely suspicious of Maoist intentions, but also conceded that he did not want to fail to deliver peace if that was possible. PDAS Mann's words of encouragement for a negotiated but meaningful peace could not have come at a better time for Deuba and the other key political leaders on the eve of the peace summit.

¶10. (U) PDAS Mann has cleared this message.

DEAN